work again. The truth is I dont know how to write this book —
I might given another 10 years of trying. Its such an
impossible book — something that flashed upon me at
Rodmell 3 years ago, as I was finishing The Lighthouse.
And it will end in failure, the worst failure of them all.
Why then make the attempt? For I could reel off books
now that would do all right, & yet must beat my head
against something that cant possibly go at all. NYPL But
thats enough — only to explain the train home — So, my
gloves, if I may say it now they are dead, were among
the worlds beauties; a present from a lady who buys at
the best shops in Paris — the only shops — where she always knows
All this winter they have eked out the shabbiness of my
stockings. — Cant be helped — I must have dropped them in
the golf course — but that party deserves a ring dropped into
the sea. No I didnt lunch with M. B: nor dine with
Lady Cunard; & I refused the Hutchinsons last night, to a
picnic today — Each of these conquests over my gadding
spirit is a tribute to you. But you're not, as I so
justly call myself, a novelist: things dont happen for
you at parties: where I might pick up a crumb perhaps:
suppose you were to hear some rare instrument: & then
couldnt go, because of a horrible headache? How is
Mrs B. letter & the false gloves.
I will ring up about the day — perhaps Tuesday next? What about that?
VW

Rota 2.4163

52 T. S. July 16th 1930

Wednesday

O Lord — do all my letters to you begin O Lord? — O Lord again, that was a nice day Ethel. How I enjoyed it, & the diversity of my sensations, as we went from solitude to society; & then back: & the wine, & the duck, & the fire — oh & everything: always ~~exc~~ excepting some twinges of compunction (they came on worse after I had left you) at my own egotistic loquacity. I can assure you I dont romanticise quite so freely about myself as a rule. It was only that you pressed some nerve, & then up started in procession the ~~as~~ usual chaos of pictures of myself — some ~~false~~ — true, others imaginary: more were true than false, I think but I ought not to have been so profuse. Next time it shall be the other story — yours. But in your benignity & perspicacity — its odd how the image of the soaring aeroplane seems to the bottom persist — you can penetrate my stumbling & fitful ways: my childish chatter. Yes — for that reason, that you see through. yet kindly, for you are, I believe, one of the kindest of women, one of the best balanced, with that maternal ~~[illegible]~~ quality which of all others I need & adore — what was I saying? — for that reason I chatter more faster & freer

to you than to other people. But I wont next time. And you wont think the worse of me, will you? You see, I am, I dont deny it, very excitable. And going home, as the wine went out & a cold sheen appeared on the roofs of Surbiton, I thought, My God what an egoist I am; & that was the only twangling wire in the whole composition. I was home by eleven; & slept; & still feel very, extraordinarily well. And I wont therefore accuse Leonard of always castrating my joys.

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I dont like Squire, but am doubtless jaundiced by my sense of his pervading mediocrity & thick thumbedness ~~headedness~~. It seems to me a hot, sentimental, ~~blund~~ blundering poem; thick handed, as usual. But I have no trust any more in my critical judgments, for every year I live I become more dyed in my own juice; & I cant help it, but I cant any longer present a personal mind to other peoples work, as you, who dont stew in ink, can do.

Rota 2.4.63

Well, this should be re-written, to comb out the tangles, but I'm writing in a hurry. We have to dine out (undressed) & I have to write to Hugh Walpole & so on; & yet I like writing to you, who are so good to me, & let me sit chattering, & keep so immensely wise & good all the time. Now do you think those epithets are right?[2]

I'll send back the coat tomorrow

V.

24 July 1930

Monday 52 T.S.

Well, your cardboard boxes delivered by architects jaunty make me gasp — the flowers, the ~~[illegible]~~ scissors, the string, the telephone, & finally my room like a bower in a garden, all shades of pink. yellow lilac nodding together in great pale bunches: How is it done? — I have garden, flowers, boxes, string — but the combination — No I cant envisage it. So I go on, sniffing & looking, & wandering — its like the edge of some sea set over a flat beach, — my room at this moment. And they havent dropped a petal. But I must

confess that last night I woke in a stew, I forget about what — on the brink of perdition, & dosed myself with Chloral, & in consequence have a head like wood. I cant frame sentences at all. Tomorrow the dose will have worn off & I'll write a better letter. (It was only half a dose, now I come to think of it & I make this confession out of deference to you.) I'll tell you about that article next time

V.

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Rota 2.V.63

July 26 1930

LONG BARN,
WEALD,
SEVENOAKS.

Saturday

Well here I am lying in Vita's adulterous sheets. I know I left a certain unfinished in my drugged letter, but cant remember what. It was a letter of thanks, wasn't it, for cardboard boxes; & then, with a graceful transition I passed on to my own works. But aint it time that Ethel talked of her works? Yes, it is. Vita & I were talking about you last night. I ~~gave~~ sketched a fancy picture of a third class

Smoker from Woking to Waterloo. Theres Ethel between 2 City gents. (Vita is putting bath salts in my bath & talking agreeably — hence my intermittent pulse in narrative) Well, Ethel ~~[illegible]~~ who has been all that a woman should be, reading the Daily Telegraph, is suddenly brought to bed of a phrase — a passage for flutes in the middle bars: ~~that~~ what do the old City gents say? And does she write it, then & then? on an old envelope? Anyhow, what Vita & I said, is, thats true happiness, writing phrases in smokers. Life holds nothing better. Ethel, we said, is the most enviable of women. my train now.

V.

NYPL
Rota v. 4. 63

V. W.

D

1930

Rodmell illness.

Leonard — Aug 30

V— " Sep 5 "

NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

Monks House   Saturday
                                    Aug. 2nd
        Rodmell.

Well it is extremely difficult to write letters here. One goes off, I find, into a kind of swoon; becomes languid as an alligator with only its nostrils above water. London keeps one braced; take away the tension & ones mind opens like a flower, or an old glove, in water. Also I have been to Worthing to see my mother in law. Also I have been tidying the house. One thing I did thanks to you — I re-read my Burney article, which is a thing I never do (I have never read any of my books a second time, except when they were re-printed, I shudder past them on the shelf as if they might bite me) anyhow, I read the article again, thanks to you, & rather liked it. The truth is though, these articles, all architecture, a kind of cabinet work. Fitting parts together, making one paragraph balance another, are such hard labour in the doing that one cant read them without ~~except~~ remembering the drudgery. One starts full tilt; one sees a scene in a flash; but the working out is almost (with me) unbelievably laborious. However, when I read it, I got more pleasure

& less sense of backbreaking effort than usual — thanks to you again. Some of it needs emphasizing though — some of it is too condensed. And I have just written another.

But this letter written drowsily with a man hammering in the village & a dog barking next door is to ask you to remember when you write to tell me fully & explicably what that rather sordid & absurd trait (these might be the epithets) in you is which you say has come to light in you lately & must be extirpated. I am really curious about this. You see, being an inexpert psychologist any help I can be given is very important to the health & stability of our friendship. Now, if I had alluded to a trait in me, you would have divined it at once, infallibly; & I want that. To be full & garrulous & that worries me. tremendously documented & illustrated, remembering my groping mole's eyes.

Except for the dog next door & the man hammering we are very quiet & content. I suppose my mind will cease to expand in a day or two, & contract; & take up the staff of life & trudge on. I went very feebly to Worthing & sat in a little match box bedroom with my mother in law, aged 80, & as ugly as an old tramp. This the most exhausting

NYPL
Rota 2.4.63

expedition I know: all lucky, all personalities, all compliments, all personal relations, & family news. And I forget which Wolf is which – And we are given cakes out of tins from her cupboard – She had been visited by Colonels Carrington Smyth, very musical, & supposed therefore to be related to you. How I hated marrying a Jew – how I hated their nasal voices, & their oriental jewellery, & their noses & their wattles – what a snob I was: for they have immense vitality, & I think I like that quality best of all. They cant die – they exist on a handful of rice & a thimble of water – their flesh dries on their bones but still they pullulate, copulate, & amass (a Mrs Pinto, fabulously wealthy came in) millions of money.

Vita & Harold & the boys were to have breakfasted here today, going to Newhaven, on a tour to Italy; but the boat went before its time, & I did not see them, so I should perhaps have heard about your letter. I'm sure nothing you could say would annoy, or embitter her – she is the most entirely magnanimous minded of women – without a vanity in her; for which I admire her immensely; & it is not that she is insensitive – merely that she is made that way. And she was telling me, in her perfectly sincere fashion, that she doesn't care a scrap for the Edwardians – prefers not to

think yet. Maybe she likes the money to flaunt in that Greedy old peasant woman's face. Lady Sackville, I mean.

I was rather relieved they had to catch the boat. My mind, this floating glove, or lily or whatever I called it, ~~drifts~~ wants to drift off into some obscure pool, & be shaded by weeds. I dont want to talk or laugh or make engagements, even with Vita. But I do want to hear about the Prison, & how you go on: it must be blazing up like a furnace now; & I daresay you see everything a little fiery (that's the way its shelt) & distorted. Ever Jan, even Virginia. What a triumph when it is done! Then you will taste bread & tea again & look at the grass for the first time this summer! But do remember, if you can put your mind to it, ~~[illegible]~~ about that sordid & absurd trait.

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Rota 2.4.63

Virginia

(1) I have just been asked to write an ~~[illegible]~~ introduction to a book partly by you: & refused. How could I introduce you & the Bishop of London?

(2) What is your cure for sleeplessness? Mine is walking on the downs — but then you & Elizabeth dont know what walking is, without a small white ball.

See how incredibly stupid I am: I do not in the least know the answer to your question "Am I a dog with a poor appetite?". Please tell me what it means. And what did Vanessa say one day to my lace? Oh dear, oh dear. And who is Leo Piddington? Thrice oh dear! And now for tea.

Monks House,
15th Aug. & 1930

Aster a pouring wet afternoon. I will write a few disjected observations, like offering to a magpie. (These birds make their nests of straw, haircombings, and other things that have been thrown away.) Ethels great grandmother on the paternal side was a Magpie.

(1) Why dont you come down for the night? This is a sensible observation. Why not be our first diner & sleeper guest? There is a train which gets you here about 4.30: met by Leonard: another takes you back about 9.30 or 2.30 next day. so that you cd. be home for tea again. I'm a little vague about dates; but I suggest, tentatively, Thursday 21st, or Friday 22nd. Please answer, & put this on a firm footing. We could talk the whole morning.

(2) As a psychologist I am myopic rather than obtuse. I see the circumference & the outline not the detail. Yes, Nessa says I am so frightfully stupid because I dont see that fly on the floor: but

I see the walk, the statues & the Venus against the pear tree, so that the position & surroundings of the fly are accurately known to me. Say that you are a fly: what you actually do & say may I may misinterpret; but your standing in the world being known to me, I always get ~~your whole~~ you ~~wrong~~ out of perspective as a whole. Therefore act & speak as frantically as you like; having (while I lay on the sofa that first afternoon) sketched your ambit — your walk, statue & pear tree, nothing minor agitation in the foreground will upset me. You see I like your circumference.

(3) Hence if I were ill I should be quite as ready to come to you as to Vita, though for entirely different reasons. When I was ill, 4 years ago, I had to spend 3 months in bed. She took me to Long Barn: there I lay in splendour & covered. The sense of her a dweller there, about her — there are some aging associations. But loving lights, pillows, & all luxury as I do, aesthetically largely, & often merely ~~spectacle~~ spectacularly, for I always aspire possessions ugly, you, if I were ill, would be as soothing; no, not that; perhaps supporting would be the better word. Sanity is what I want. A robust sense of fact. Well, wouldn't you give me that? Wasn't you — anyhow

to my sense, warred with the world sufficiently to have made ~~these~~ intervals of peace?

The object of this remark is I think to prove ~~say~~ that I am diverse enough to want Vita & Ethel & Leonard & Vanessa & oh some other people too. But jealousy is not a very bad fault is it? I am often jealous of other people's gifts. Only to think I want the swansdown only is not an accurate picture of my mind.

(4) Then Perversion.

Yes, I am afraid I do agree with you in thinking it silly. But I suspect we are wrong. I suspect the ramrod & gunpowder of our East Indian grandfather have ~~influence~~ influences us. I think we are being provincial & petty. When I go to what we call a x Buggery Poke party, I feel as if I had strayed into the male urinal; a wet, smelly, trivial kind of place. I fought with Eddy Sackville over this: I often fight with my friends. How silly, how pretty you sodomites are I said; whereat he flared up & accused me of having a red-nosed grandfather. For myself, why did I tell you that I had only once felt physical feeling for a man ~~who~~ when he felt nothing for me? No — I suppose in some spiritual trance of inaccuracy.

+ There's a Farm here called Moggery Poke

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Rota 2.4.63

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NYPL

Rota 2.4.63

had I felt physical feeling for him, then, no doubt, we should have married, or had a shot at something. But my feelings were all of the spiritual, intellectual, emotional kind. And when 2 or 3 times in all, I felt physically for a man, then he was so obtuse, gallant, foxhunting & dull that I — diverse as I am — could only wheel round & gallop the other way. Perhaps this shows why Clive, who had his reasons, always called me a fish. Vita also calls me fish. And deeply (I think often while holding their hands & getting ~~the~~ exquisite pleasure from contact with either male or female body) 'But what I want of you is More on — to make the world dance.' More than that, I cannot get my sense of unity & coherency & all that makes me wish to write the Lighthouse &c. unless I am perpetually stimulated. Its no good sitting in a garden with a book; or collecting facts. There must be this fanning & drumming — Of course I get it tremendously from Leonard — but differently — Lord Lord how many things I want — how many ~~different~~ flowers I visit — & often I plunge into London, between tea & dinner, & walk — walk, revolving mysteries, in the City, in some wretched streets, where I peep in at the doors of public houses. Where people mistake, as I think, is in perpetually narrowing & naming these immensely composite & wide flung passions — ~~penning~~ driving stakes through them, herding them between screens. But how do you define "Perversity"? What is the line between friendship & perversion? Well, enough — especially as I read in your last letter that you dont want remarks about character. And I've no doubt these are all wrong; but I'm treating you as a woman whose paternal Grandmother was a magpie. V.